



Lock It Before You Leave It campaign

Cybersecurity Awareness Month 2026

Background

- It is a cybersecurity best practice to lock your computer when you are away from it to keep unauthorized users from accessing your information.
- Keeping your computer locked protects users from identity theft and the Commonwealth from confidential or sensitive information being leaked.
- Despite the risk, employees commonly leave their computers unlocked when they step away.
- VITA's 2025 Lock It Before You Leave It campaign sought to address this issue. The awareness and behavior-change campaign resulted in a 71% decrease in unattended computers left unlocked from the beginning of Cybersecurity Awareness Month to the end.
- This campaign is a great way for cybersecurity professionals across the Commonwealth to make a tangible impact at their agency that they can report to leadership.

Goals

- Spread awareness about risks of leaving your computer unlocked.
- Encourage behavior change by convincing staff not to leave computers unlocked.
- Improve cybersecurity at your agency.

Objectives

- Fewer unattended computers left unlocked compared to the baseline collected before the campaign begins.

Audience

- All agency staff who use computers.

Tips

- Don't call anyone out in front of others as they could feel shamed.



- People don't like their belongings being touched. Do not touch their computer, even to lock it or close it. Also, do not adhere stickers to their computer or desk. Just leave them on their desk.

Key messages

- It is a cybersecurity risk to leave your computer unlocked when you walk away from your desk.
- A hacker could access sensitive information that may compromise the Commonwealth.
- Hackers could be anywhere. They may be a coworker, even someone familiar to you.
- You should always lock your computer if your computer is not directly in sight, even if you are only walking away for a moment or are close by.
- Report any suspicious activity to the relevant party (HR, facilities, your manager, IT).
- Be a lock star! Lock your computer to keep the agency and the Commonwealth cyber-safe.
- Team members will survey cubicles throughout October to count how many unattended computers are left unlocked. The results will be shared at the end of the month, so make sure you lock it before you leave it!
- If our surveyors find your unattended computer locked, you will receive a congratulatory sticker for a job well done. Unlocked computers will get a reminder to do better next time.
- When you earn a lock star sticker, proudly display it to show others you care about cybersecurity and to help spread the word.
- Quick tips to help you keep your computer locked up:
 - On a Windows PC: Press Windows + L to lock your device
 - On a Mac: Press Control + Command + Q to lock your device
 - Enable the screen timeout/auto-lock setting
 - Don't leave your laptop out overnight. Store it securely.

Tactics

Access all materials and resources on [VITA's Cyber Awareness webpage](#).

- Spread awareness by sharing key messages, posting **flyers**, distributing internal messages through your agency's unique channels (intranet, email, Teams, etc.) and sharing [VITA's Lock It Before You Leave It video](#).



- Track the number of locked and unlocked computers using the **tally tracker**. Please see the tally methodology section below for more details on tracking.
- Award employees who lock their computers with a **sticker**.
- Remind employees who leave their unattended computers unlocked by placing an **unlocked computer note** on their desk. Optional: You can also leave a banana on their desk along with the note. The banana is eye-catching, memorable and light-hearted.
- Encourage staff to lock their computers by reminding them that you are conducting random surveys and that the campaign results will be shared at the end of the month. You can also create friendly competition by tracking floors or work units separately and recognizing the winning area at the end of the month.

Tally methodology

The key is to ensure your data is **consistent and easily comparable**, so you have clear results at the end of the campaign.

- **Baseline:** Be sure to develop a baseline by tracking locked and unlocked computers before your agency begins communicating about the campaign. This allows you to demonstrate employees' normal behavior without any influence.
- **Consistent sample size:** Choose the number of computers you will track and adhere to it throughout the campaign. For example, at VITA, we chose to track 10 unattended computers per floor, per week. On any given week, if we didn't find 10 unattended computers during our first survey, we would continue surveying throughout the week until we found 10 unattended computers.
- **Weekly count:** Surveying each week will allow you to track improvements throughout the month and result in more detailed data. You can use this information to track your campaign's success in real time, and increase campaign reminders if, for example, your agency's rate of unlocked computers isn't decreasing enough.
- **Separate by floor or work unit:** This is optional but can provide insights into how each group is performing and inform more targeted messaging. You can also use it to inspire friendly competition.
- **Randomized:** Conduct surveys at different times of day and in different areas of the office.
- **Be discreet:** Keep surveyors anonymous to avoid skewing results. Even if you keep it a secret, people may figure out who the surveyors are, and act differently than they normally would. If possible, regularly switch surveyors.